

The Source of Moral Disintegration

America is experiencing its greatest dilemma since its birth 200 years ago—a crisis of values. In the past 20 years our nation has been shaken by a bitter Vietnam War controversy, Watergate, rampant street crime, arrogant organized crime, lopsided criminal justice, strife-torn cities, blazing ghettos, bitter racial riots, assassinations, bribery of high-ranking officials, polluted environments, wild melees on college campuses, and unprecedented brazenness of undisciplined youth.

America's Disintegration

In this period of unrest, black militants, Spanish-speaking minorities, and American Indians have demanded their rights. Joining in the fray for rights are men, women, children, welfare recipients, mentally ill, handicapped, radicals, and gays. With the new liberation movement came the great sexual revolution, in which total freedom became the vogue. Sex standards, chastity, modesty, marriage fidelity, and virginity became passe; while premarital sex, adultery, pornography, open prostitution, topless and bottomless bars, and even complete nudity were accepted. Venereal disease mushroomed and illegitimate births skyrocketed, and abortion became the accepted solution for unwanted children.

Pressure and confusion were generated over traditional family structures, frustrating and dividing families. The courts, instead of promoting family togetherness during these periods of tension, granted greater freedom to separate and divorce; the unprecedented surge in family breakdowns resulted in nearly one divorce for every two marriages. Some fathers have been demanding-and receiving the custody of their children, yet in a rising number of cases neither parent wants the child. Abuse of dangerous drugs and alcoholism soared among teenagers. Yearly a minimum of one million youth, largely from middle-class homes, run away from home; other frustrated young people commit suicide, now the second leading cause of death in people between the ages of 15 and 24.

In contrast to the serious deterioration of values within the past 20 years, there were remarkable discoveries and technological advances: A quarter of a million miles away, a man walked on the moon and set up the American flag while the awestruck world watched on TV. A space ship landed safely on Mars about 35 million miles from earth, diagnosed

soil samples, and sent the information back for scientific analysis. Open heart surgery, organ transplants, transistorized circuits, miniaturized computers, satellite communications, space shuttles, and laser beam technology were developed.

Civilizational Crisis

In the midst of this remarkable technology, America experienced a civilizational crisis that fragmented our nation. The schools, plagued for decades with progressive concepts, quickly joined the liberation movement promoting greater student freedom. Leading educators yearning for a more egalitarian society permitted standards to vanish, the end result being an appalling decline in student achievement. Nevertheless, guaranteed success was provided, causing the soaring rate of illiterate graduates.

Standards of behavior changed and disappeared. Traditional parental values were razed, and the new standard became “If it feels good, do it.” Acceptance of all moral systems became the mode, leaving students powerless to create a coherent system of constructive values. With this new rootless pluralism, our nation and schools began to disintegrate. Cheating, dishonesty, disobedience, stealing, crime, and immorality became widespread. Concerned individuals ask, “What can America do to stop this terrifying decline in national morality?”

To the founding fathers, religion and government were twin necessities to maintain a moral society. At the same time, they were firm in their insistence on separation of a national church and the federal government. They had a vision of a firm reliance upon God, who gave mankind unalienable human rights, and of a government that was responsible for securing these rights. The early American leaders laid our national foundation upon a theistic value system, which produced a high standard of morality and brought about a coherent bond between home, place of worship, community, and school.

Supreme Court’s Prayer and Bible Reading Decisions

In 1962 the United States Supreme Court, in *Engel v. Vitale*,¹ outlawed state-mandated prayers. In 1963, in *Abington School District v. Schempp*,² the Court ruled against state-mandated Bible reading in public schools. These Warren Court decisions had a far greater impact than just the surface issue of saying a prayer or reading the Bible in school. Though for many years there had been a steady erosion of our theistic heritage, the Court’s rulings dealt a deathblow to the traditional value system.

Though the Supreme Court did not say that the historic theistic ethic was outlawed, many educational leaders considered the decisions an official governmental rejection of our moral legacy as the criterion for the school's ethical system. This rejection acted as a wedge between society's common moral standards and schools. This created a moral vacuum in the educational system. For decades the progressive movement's teaching of secular humanism had tried to dominate educational philosophy. Following the Supreme Court's school prayer and Bible reading decisions, atheistic humanism quickly filled the moral vacuum and became the substitute for our traditional value system. Since 1962 it can be clearly observed that schools have been overtaken with humanistic permissive policies. At the same time America began to experience an escalating flood of immoral behavior.

Two Conflicting Ideologies

What the American public needs to understand is the root cause of the school crisis. Throughout this book the conflict between two ideologies has been revealed: one advocates permissiveness, freedom without responsibility, instant gratification, no tests, no homework, free and open classrooms, automatic promotion, profane textbooks, parental disrespect, laxity toward misbehavior, lowering of standards, situational ethics, maximum individual autonomy, sexual license, euthanasia, right to suicide, anti-Americanism, and atheism. The other favors discipline, *in loco parentis* concept, law and order, freedom with responsibility, work ethic, academic excellence, knowledge of the basics, tests, homework, achievement promotion, parental respect, decent textbooks, sexual purity, patriotism, and theism.

Humanist Manifesto

The conflict is between humanism and the traditional American value system based upon a theistic ethic. Once this humanistic philosophy is understood, it becomes clear that its progressive teaching has permeated not only our schools but our society, and it continues to be the archenemy of educational success and national morality. The humanists have produced two manifestos describing their beliefs. The first was published in 1933, one of its chief architects being the philosopher and educator John Dewey, father of the modern progressive educational system. Because of new events a second manifesto was published in 1973. A careful reading of these documents will reveal their destructive philosophy. Following are

some excerpts:

Humanist Manifesto II

Preface

The next century can be and should be the humanistic century . . .

Traditional moral codes and newer irrational cults both fail to meet the pressing needs of today and tomorrow. False “theologies of hope” and messianic ideologies, substituting new dogmas for old, cannot cope with existing world realities. They separate rather than unite peoples.

Religion

We believe, however, that traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience do a disservice to the human species. Any account of nature should pass the tests of scientific evidence; in our judgment, the dogmas and myths of traditional religions do not do so. Even at this late date in human history, certain elementary facts based upon the critical use of scientific reason have to be restated. We find insufficient evidence for belief in the existence of a supernatural; it is either meaningless or irrelevant to the question of the survival and fulfillment of the human race. As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.

Too often traditional faiths encourage dependence rather than independence, obedience rather than affirmation, fear rather than courage. More recently they have generated concerned social action, with many signs of relevance appearing in the wake of the “God Is Dead” theologies. But we can discover no divine purpose or providence for the human species. While there is much that we do not know, humans are responsible for what we are or will become. No deity will save us; we must save ourselves.

Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful. They distract humans from present concerns, from self-actualization, and from rectifying social injustices.

Ethics

We affirm that moral values derive their source from human experience. Ethics is *autonomous* and *situational*, needing no theological or ideological sanction.

The Individual

The preciousness and dignity of the individual person is a central humanist value. Individuals should be encouraged to realize their own creative talents and desires. We reject all religious, ideological, or moral codes that denigrate the individual, suppress freedom, dull intellect, dehumanize personality. We believe in maximum individual autonomy consonant with social responsibility.

In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct. The right to birth control, abortion, and divorce should be recognized. While we do not approve of exploitative, denigrating forms of sexual expression, neither do we wish to prohibit, by law or social sanction, sexual behavior between consenting adults. The many varieties of sexual exploration should not in themselves be considered “evil.”

Moral education for children and adults is an important way of developing awareness and sexual maturity.

Democratic Society

To enhance freedom and dignity the individual must experience a full range of civil liberties in all societies. It also includes a recognition of an individual’s right to die with dignity, euthanasia, and the right to suicide.

World Community

We deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds. We have reached a turning point in human history where the best option is to *transcend the limits of national sovereignty* and to move toward the building of a world community in which

all sectors of the human family can participate. Thus we look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government.

Humanity as a Whole

In closing: The world cannot wait for a reconciliation of competing political or economic systems to solve its problems. These are the times for men and women of good will to further the building of a peaceful and prosperous world. We urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcended.³

The implementation of this humanistic philosophy shows why schools face their worst crisis. One can wonder why patriotism and American history are downplayed in classes while the negative aspects of national leaders are magnified. But when one realizes humanists “deplore the division of humankind on nationalistic grounds” and “look to the development of a system of world law and a world order based upon transnational federal government” it becomes clear that patriotism hinders a one-world government.

Humanism claims: “Ethics is autonomous and situational, needing no theological or ideological sanction.” And “In the area of sexuality, we believe that intolerant attitudes, often cultivated by orthodox religions and puritanical cultures, unduly repress sexual conduct.” No longer should anyone be perplexed why textbooks encourage lying, contain profanity, and mock religious faiths while sex educational courses promote premarital sex, abortion, homosexuality, adultery, and prostitution—these are humanistic values.

For humanists, “The world cannot wait for a reconciliation of competing political or economic systems to solve its problems,” so they “urge that parochial loyalties and inflexible moral and religious ideologies be transcended.” An excellent method to speed the process of the humanization of the world is to alienate children from parents’ value systems. The children’s liberation movement, which stresses children’s rights to smoke, drink, quit school, work, disobey parents, and choose where to live, is an excellent vehicle to promote humanistic aims.

Values clarification, which puts all values into a nonjudgmental blender, is an ideal method to make the next century a “humanistic

century.” In *Values Clarification*, the most popular book on this subject, coauthors Sidney B. Simon, Leland W. Howe, and Howard Kirschenbaum inform readers, “For a list of materials currently available and workshops offered in the values-clarification area, write to the Adirondack Mountain Humanistic Education Center.”⁴ It is humanists who promote values clarification.

A perfect humanistic tool to train 10-year-old children is the social studies course MACOS (Man: A Course of Study). This one-year course justifies adultery, wife swapping, cannibalism, suicide, the slaying of female babies, and the killing of the elderly. Since books are conveniently left in school, the parents’ damaging value system cannot counteract course contents.

The humanists’ strongest attack is against “traditional dogmatic or authoritarian religions that place revelation, God, ritual, or creed above human needs and experience. “They declare, “As non-theists, we begin with humans not God, nature not deity.” And “Promises of immortal salvation or fear of eternal damnation are both illusory and harmful.” Consequently, humanists try everything to rid children of these “harmful” religious teachings. One such attack concerns the book *Biology A Search for Order in Complexity*, put out by Zondervan Publishing House, which endeavors to present both the theory of evolution and scientific evidence for creation. Adoption of this book by a number of states, *Eternity* magazine reports, “has stirred the anger of many uptight evolutionists, who apparently want to ‘burn’ the Zondervan creation-oriented text.”⁵ The book was developed by the Institute for Creation Research, and its magazine, *Acts & Facts*, states, “The American Humanist Association, under the inspiration and leadership of its president, Bette Chambers, has launched a drive against efforts of creationists to convince educational authorities to teach the scientific evidence for creation in public schools.”⁶

It is strange that when parents object to textbooks containing obscenities, ridiculing religious faiths, promoting antipatriotic sentiments, and supporting degrading sexual practices they are labeled fanatical censors, yet humanists who attack textbooks that provide children an option to believe in scientific creationism or evolution claim they are supporting the constitutional concepts of separation of church and state. When one understands the humanist manifesto, it is no longer strange; now the entire educational puzzle begins to make sense—humanists freely censor books that teach traditional morality based on our theistic

Schools in Crisis: Training for Success or Failure?

heritage. They are staunch atheists and tolerate nothing that contradicts their theory and provides students with the “detrimental” teaching that God exists and provides moral standards.

Once humanism is understood, it becomes evident that this philosophy is the source of America’s moral disintegration and has caused the grave social crisis. To produce moral citizens, we need to reject humanism as our educational philosophy and restore the moral values that made our nation successful.